

for Craig T



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

**TOWN OF WALLINGFORD
CONNECTICUT**

**WILLIAM W. DICKINSON, JR.
MAYOR**

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March 20, 2019

**TO: General Law Committee Co-Chairs Michael D'Agostino and John W. Fonfara
Judiciary Committee Co-Chairs Gary Winfield and Steven Stafstrom**

RE: TESTIMONY FOR HB-7371 AND SB-1085

Dear Committee Members:

This testimony addresses proposed bills HB-7371 and SB-1085 concerning the retail sale of cannabis. The community of Wallingford is opposed to this legislation. We are not opposed to the potential use of cannabis. We are opposed to the use of cannabis prior to conducting thorough research and clinical studies to determine the safety of its use for medicinal or recreational purposes.

This year, 2019, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services is spending \$750,000,000 to identify substances other than opioids as alternatives for treatment of pain. Should we not advocate that marijuana be part of that testing program prior to approving of its use? At the very least, the Connecticut Health Department should be identifying for our state what benefits and risks accompany the use of cannabis.

Failure to perform science driven tests and analysis makes us vulnerable to repeating the error of permitting long term opioid use without appropriate testing. As a result, we now experience an epidemic of addiction. The primacy of public health and the protocols of scientific testing should receive our attention and prioritization.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "William W. Dickinson, Jr.", written over a horizontal line.

**William W. Dickinson, Jr.
Mayor**

jms

c: Senator Len Fasano
Representative Liz Linchan
Representative Vincent J. Candelora
Representative Craig Fishbein
Representative Mary Mushinsky

COMMON ARGUMENT #1

“We’re not talking about legalizing marijuana for kids. We are talking about responsible adults over 21. Why do you keep bringing up kids?”

Beyond the intention of the law is its ripple effect. Colorado is increasingly realizing this reality. I believe that we are all in agreement that pot is especially harmful to teen user and that we need to keep it out of their hands.

Fact or fiction? Most recent data reveals that overall teen use in Colorado is stable (i.e., insignificantly down) for young people since legalization and in line with the national average (Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment released July 2018). If we are trying to prove a point in favor of legalization we would stop right there in the belief that our point has been proven by “the facts.” This report is understandably a favorite of pro-legalization supporters.

Unfortunately, the full story is not being told by this single survey that is being commonly referenced.

First of all, there has absolutely been a deleterious impact upon children as evidenced by a sharp increase in THC related visits to emergency rooms and poison control centers. From 2005 to 2015, 4202 marijuana-related visits occurred (median patient age, 16; 54% male). The annual number of such visits increased from 161 in 2005 to 777 in 2015; from 2009 to 2015, the rate of such visits increased significantly from 1.8 to 4.9 per 1000 ED/UC visits. Marijuana-related behavioral health evaluations were obtained in 67% of visits overall; rates of these evaluations more than doubled from 2009 to 2015, from 1.2 to 3.2 per 1000 ED visits.

Also, children with exposure to secondhand marijuana and tobacco smoke have an increased rate of emergency department visitation, according to a study presented at the annual meeting of the Pediatric Academic Societies, held from May 5 to 8 in Toronto.

And while overall teen use has stayed about the same (so far), there has been a significant increase of use within the 18-25 population, years in which the brain is still being developed. It’s a problem that even proponents of legalization should seek to counteract in any comprehensive, societally responsible bill proposals.

The raw numbers would have some to believe that pot legalization has effectively held down or even reduced teen usage. The reality is that Colorado has worked very hard and spent a lot of money to educate both parents and youth about the dangers of marijuana use upon still developing brains.

According to Colorado Governor John Hickenlooper, “Preventing young people from using marijuana is a statewide priority. While youth use hasn’t gone up, we are working hard to educate Colorado parents and their children about the health and legal risks of underage marijuana use.”

Their work has been effective. The lesson to be learned is that such education is an absolutely necessary component of any form of recreational marijuana legalization. To talk about legalization without mention of education and other preventative measures to keep our children and young people safe is irresponsibly selfish.